

Hades: The Construction of a Graphic Novel

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"Hades" is a short graphic novel that reinterprets the sixth chapter of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in light of Dante's *Inferno*. Descent into a pit, animal symbolism, guilt and condemnation, and the implications of death form a few of the themes I address in the booklet. The sixth chapter of *Ulysses* details the journey of the protagonist, Leopold Bloom, and three other men as they ride in the funeral procession of their mutual acquaintance, Paddy Dignam. As they travel, Bloom's convoluted internal narrative touches on subjects such as suicide, the death of his infant son, his estranged wife, and the many forms and consequences of death.

I chose to do "Hades" as a graphic novel because the medium multiplies interpretive possibilities, rather than limiting them. The author can intentionally place visual clues to interpretation when the narrative requires silence. Conversely, the author can allow the literal narrative to take a leading role when the story moves into a realm not easily pictorialized. In "Hades," I tried to recreate the disorienting experience of reading *Ulysses*. Joyce never allows the reader to get "comfortable" with the text, preferring that the reader be buffeted about, as it were, just as Odysseus himself is.

Although graphic novels representing *Ulysses* have been created before, "Hades" breaks away from a straightforward retelling: it is a unique artistic creation in itself. As such, I hope to inspire my audience to discover, perhaps for the first time, *Ulysses* and *Inferno*.

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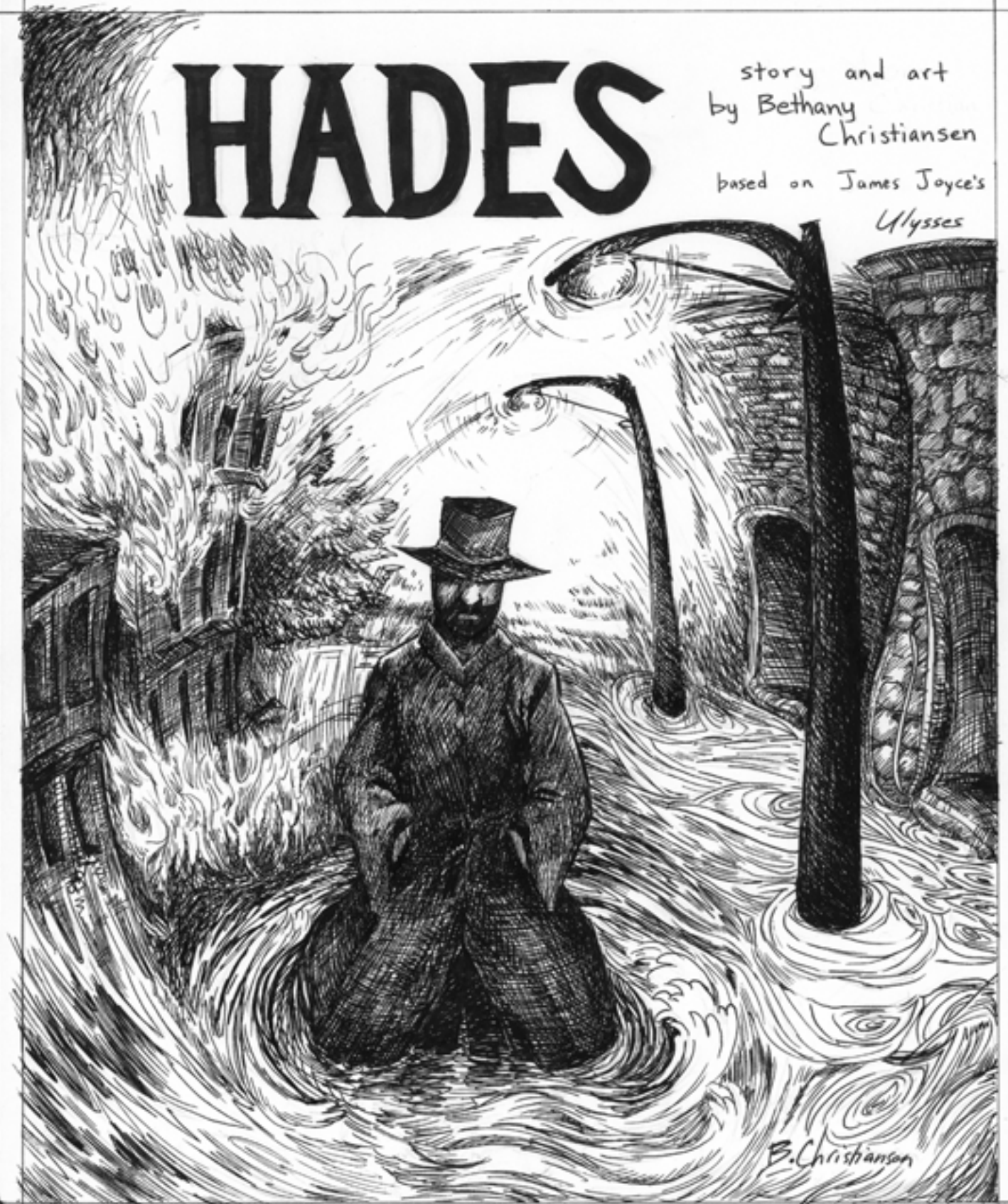
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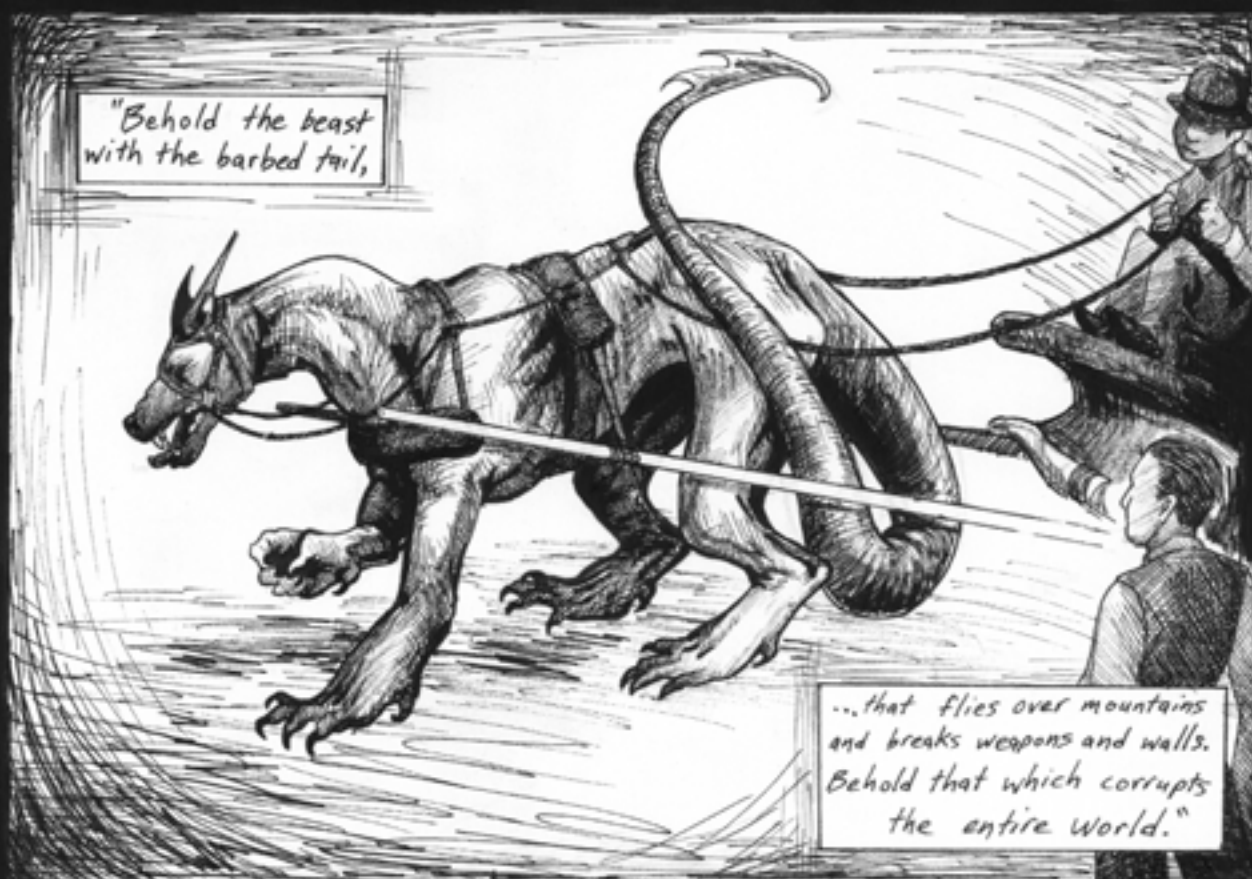
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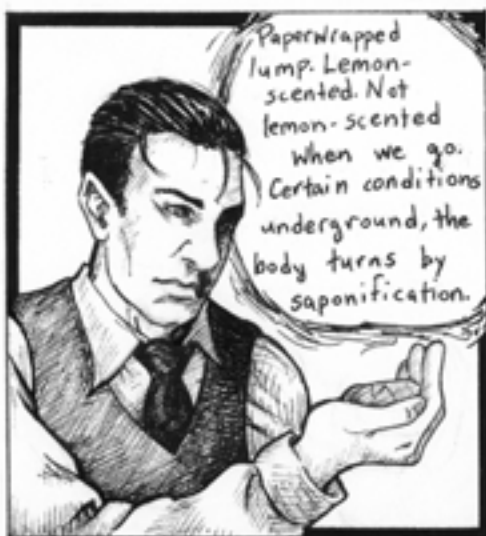
HADES

story and art
by Bethany
Christiansen
based on James Joyce's
Ulysses



"WHO IS THIS WHO DARES TO GO WITHOUT DEATH THROUGH DEATH'S KINGDOM?"





Paperdrapped
lump. Lemon-
scented. Not
lemon-scented
when we go.
Certain conditions
underground, the
body turns by
saponification.



Waxlike. Only the fat though.
Wonder if it sanitizes. Keeps the
maggots out.

They say
many famous
people have
committed
suicide.
The mark
of a great
artist.



That kind of
temporary
insanity.

Great
Weakness
you
mean.

Unforgiveable.

Murder of
oneself no
less a crime,
but the thing is,
that it's not
punishable.

Do you
suppose they
become bushes or
trees perhaps in the
afterlife? Given a
different sort of body.

Didn't like the
one they
had... Or
they
disappear,
no body
at all
anymore,
no
resurrection.
Hmm...



No body to
come back
to.



Just twigs and
branches and leaves.
Bleed if you break
them. Scream
too. Met him pike hoses.



Metamorphosis.
Transformation of the body. A different kind of life. Like making love in among the headstones. Turns them on, you know...



No easy way out. Suffering
from Mother and child, just breathe
dear that's it. In
through your nose
out through
your mouth.

Then once the thing is over
and there you have it the
mauve little protester hiccuping
in the shoebox.

The little white coffin
just the size of a
shoebox too.



Molly didn't sleep much then. Cried
for a few days. Breasts shrunk again
because the milk was extra. Still
beautiful though, great full bubs
beneath the towel as she walked
from the bath.

Firm limbed fertile
full breasted.
Strong legs too.

Prize heffer.

Why the hell have we stopped?!

It seems they're driving cattle across the road...

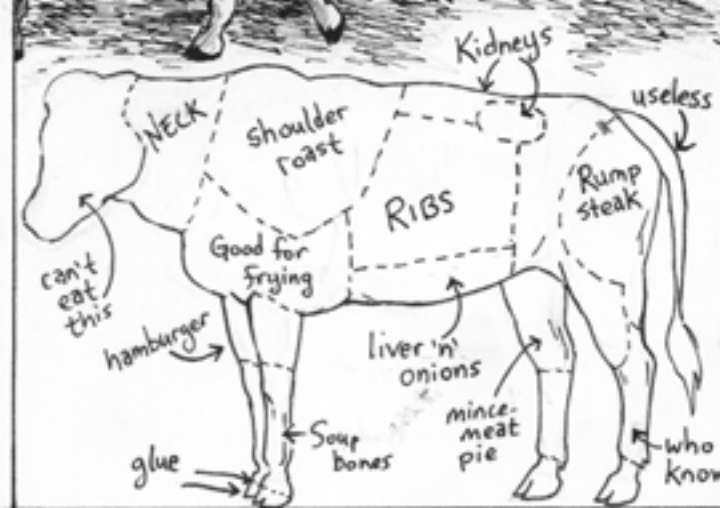
Cattle? I wonder that they're like a kind of lost children.

Tribe of helpless.

But to take them out to feed them wandering, herded, rather hope they don't fall into chasms.

Unfortunate Exiles.

From Africa, I suppose down south, the heat makes their hair short can go so long without water then store it up in their backs as do camels. Taken in docile, staggering bob.



Mothers like
shepherds of necessity
and necessity
takes them to
slaughter.

Economic exchange
the needful
slaughter of
innocence.

Ruminant from at least
four stomachs and to chew their
cud mouthfuls and churn it
like we do thoughts.

Should improve the good
absorption of nutrients into
the linings of the
colon or is it colons
or the jejunum
that takes vitamins in the
such?

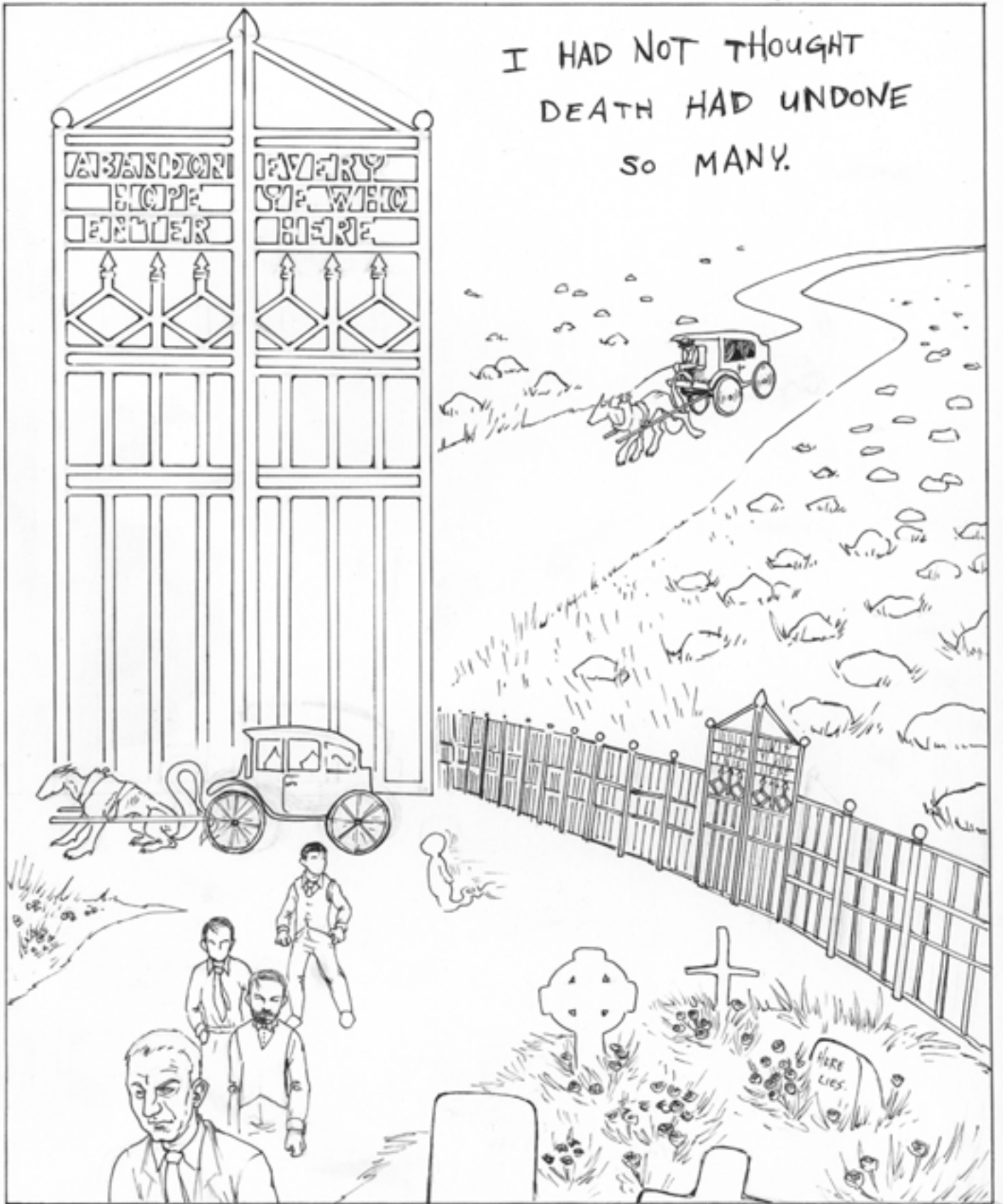


I wonder
what makes
it keep
growing...



They say
that growth of
fingernails and hair
continues after death.
Digestion too, if food
was in the guts.

I HAD NOT THOUGHT
DEATH HAD UNDONE
SO MANY.





We fear the descent.

Drowning not
a pretty death:
purple, a bloated
floatsam.

Heart bursts in the chest.



Shudder to think
that's the way I
go in the end.



Wonder what it is we
see once the light of the
eyes dims —

tunnels like under
trains or
perhaps...

...like staring
down into the
nine-layered abyss.

Final descent of
the spirit.

The pain gone. Like stumbling
down a long crooked crumbling
road alone or maybe with
the thousands others gone that day
too. Thick-legged stumping one
by one down the chute, the
bright gleaming light towards God
knows what.

Or just darkness,
the end of
the line.

Body fades.
A release.



Last train.





≡ Squeak! ≡

And look at the
jolly fellow!

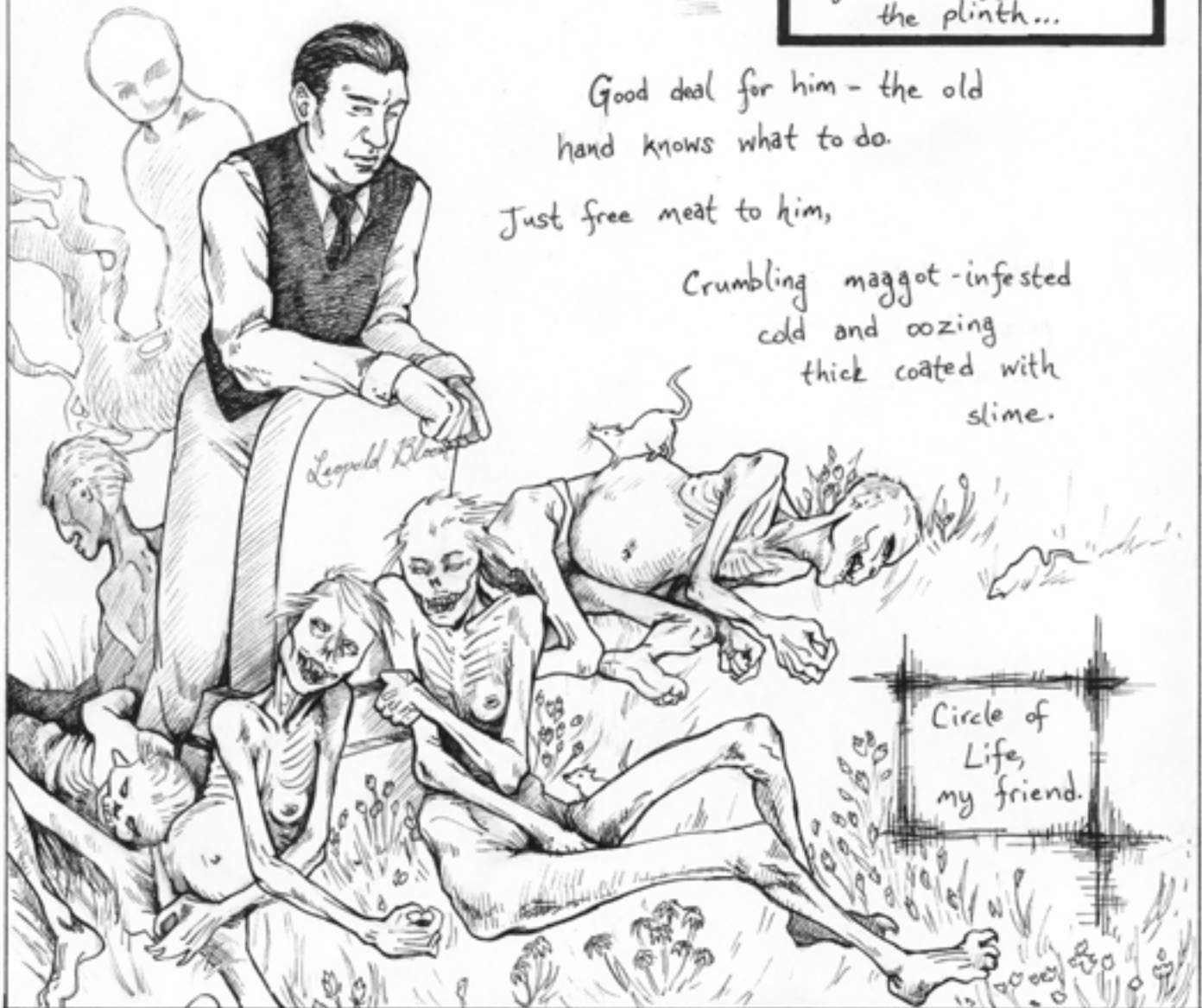


Quite content to
waddle down in broad
day and wriggle under
the plinth...

Good deal for him - the old
hand knows what to do.

Just free meat to him,

Crumbling maggot-infested
cold and oozing
thick coated with
slime.



Circle of
Life,
my friend.